DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 872 HE 028 021

AUTHOR Brownlow, Sue, Ed.
TITLE Equal Outcomes--Equal Experiences? Mendip Papers.
INSTITUTION Staff Coll., Bristol (England).
REPORT NO MP-059
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 42p.
AVAILABLE FROM Staff College, Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6RG, England, United Kingdom (5.50 British pounds).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Continuing Education; Cooperative Programs; *Educational Cooperation; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Institutional Cooperation; Outcomes of Education; *Partnerships in Education; Shared Resources and Services; *Universities; *Vocational Schools
IDENTIFIERS *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This collection of articles, based on the 1993 annual consultations between the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) and The Staff College (Bristol, England), examines the nature of franchising (partnerships) between further education (vocational and continuing education) and higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. The articles are: (1) "Introduction" (Sue Brownlow and Heather Eggins); (2) "Setting the Scene" (Susanne Haselgrove); (3) "The Nature of the Higher Education Experience" (John Kingman); (4) "Second Generation Franchising: Widening the Partnership Network" (David Morris); (5) "The Validating University and Associated Colleges: The Evolution of a Relationship" (Jennifer Bone and others); and (6) "HE/FE Partnerships: Redrawing the Boundaries" (Jean Bocock and Peter Scott). Three workshop sessions are summarized These focused on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of partnerships; learning support, resources, and quality; and recommendations for future further education/higher education partnerships. (MDM)

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Mendip Papers

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Equal outcomes – equal experiences?

Edited by Sue Brownlow

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Series edited and designed at The Staff College by Pippa Toogood and Susan Leather, Publications Department, and produced by the Reprographics Department.

Published by The Staff College,
Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol BS18 6RG
Telephone (0761) 462503
Fax (0761) 463104 or 463140 (Publications Department)

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Mendip Papers

Equal outcomes – equal experiences?

Edited by Sue Brownlow

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INTRODUCTION

Sue Brownlow and Heather Eggins

The annual consultations organised jointly by the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) and The Staff College have been concerned with a number of key issues in post-compulsory education with relevance to both further and higher education. The topic chosen for the 1993 consultation – that of franchising – focused on partnerships between the two sectors and how students experience those partnerships. The papers delivered and the ensuing discussion bear out some of the organisational and cultural differences which still exist between the two sectors, but they also demonstrate a commitment by both FE and HE to resolve their differences and establish effective partnerships serving the interests of both students and institutions.

The programme was designed to shift the emphasis away from the 'nuts and bolts' of franchising arrangements and onto the students' experience of franchised programmes. In early franchising models, further education institutions (FEIs) and higher education institutions (HEIs) laid emphasis on ensuring that the outcomes of students' learning were equal wherever and however they followed a programme. Such a preoccupation is easily understood since it has been the focus of the quality assurance process within institutions and the main concern of external validating bodies. Shifting the focus to a review of process and student experience leads to a direct confrontation of the issue of what is higher education in the new mass system, which is the theme of several of the papers.

It is evident from this conference that FEIs are beginning to give closer attention to the place of franchises within their portfolio of work and question the extent to which they might be a drain on other provision. The suggestion arising in the final discussion that FEIs should be able to bid direct to the HEFC highlights the centrality of resource issues to FE/HE links. The discussion sessions revealed considerable disquiet about the resources which some HEIs were prepared to pass on to FE partners as well as the potential for cross-subsidy from FEFC-funded work, particularly in relation to capital funding.

The conference also raised concerns about the degree of institutional turbulence being created in FEIs as a result of changes in HE sector funding, most obviously the restrictions on HE expansion resulting from recent Autumn Statements. FEIs questioned their position as buffers at the margin of HE provision who might be the first to be discarded to preserve HEIs' core activities.

Both sectors were agreed that they wished to move away from the term 'franchising' to describe the delivery of higher education off-campus. Partnership was the preferred term, particularly because it moves away from a hierarchical model of the HEI controlling the relationship and prompts questions about more appropriate roles for each partner institution.

All of these issues will become more acute as we enter a period in which the balance of funding has changed radically, when FE growth is set against HE contraction and increased financial pressure on students. Perhaps a return to this theme in five years' time would be instructive.

SETTING THE SCENE

Susanne Haselgrove, Conference organising team

Introduction

This section highlights the particular nature of this consultation and distinguishes it from all the other conferences on franchising which people have attended over the years. When I was at Coventry University I was involved in setting up a wide range of franchising arrangements with more than 25 partner institutions. Considerable time and effort were spent trying to ensure that the outcomes were the same wherever the students were following the programme. Efforts were made to ensure that college staff were involved in course management and most particularly in assessment procedures which were the key to ensuring equal outcomes. To a certain extent this emphasis arose from the format of the memoranda of co-operation which the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and the other validating bodies required. There was an implicit assumption that all efforts would be made to ensure that the student experience was as good as possible but there was little explicit discussion of what that meant. Discussion focused on tangible mechanisms rather than intangible process.

An explicit review of the nature of the higher education experience in general is very timely. The system is becoming more and more diverse. Not only is the UK moving from an elite to a mass system but also people are now studying at a higher education level in a much wider range of locations – at the main sites of HEIs, in partner further education colleges, in the workplace and in their own homes. Students are also a much more heterogeneous mixture than before, bringing with them a diverse set of prior experiences which impact on how they experience higher education. To give one example, the 1992 higher education cohort was the first in which mature students formed the majority. What are their expectations and experiences of a system designed for school-leavers?

The research perspective

The most extensive research on franchising is that carried out at the University of the West of England, funded by the Department of Employment (Bird, Crawley and Sheibani 1993). Because the team chose as their major research tool open-ended interviews with staff and students in HEIs and FEIs, their results give a much more qualitative impression which brings us closer to the student experience than other research reports. The views which they elicited on the comparability of FE and HE provision serve as an interesting background to our discussions.

It has been one of the strongest messages of HMI reports on franchising that the student experience in FE should be comparable to that in the partner HE institution. This has been seen as one of the essential pillars of quality in partnerships. Those interviewed provide some interesting elaborations of this view:

- it is important to recognise that FEIs and HEIs are different and have different strengths;
- following this, a simplistic view that quality in HE can be reproduced exactly in FE, is misleading;
- it is recognised by students and staff that FEIs have particular strengths that HEIs find difficult to reproduce – small seminar groups, close contact with staff, good quality counselling and guidance. Students who move to level 2 courses in HE consistently stress these factors which FE provided and HE falls short on;
- equally, there are areas where HEIs have particular strengths – library and laboratory facilities, student union facilities;
- it is clear – as far as students are concerned – that evaluating strengths and weaknesses is complex. For example, many of the mature students were hardly concerned at

all with the lack of student union facilities in FE;

- it is important to recognise that comparability of experience relates closely to the type of student we are considering. In both FE and HE the student body is increasingly diverse, so any simple correlation between the experience of students on the first year course in FE and HE is difficult to make;

- the experience of part-time students in FE is that they are worse off than part-time students on comparable years/courses in HE;

- there was some indication that, in certain FEIs, HE students felt culturally isolated from the reality of HE.

(Bird, Crawley and Sheibani 1993, 24)

The new student and the new education

Students who spend even their first HE year in FE stress (ibid) that they were not getting a 'proper' experience of higher education, they did not perceive themselves as 'real' students. To understand this view it is important to acknowledge that individuals' perceptions of student life are dominated much more by the images of popular culture than by the reality of modern higher education as educational professionals perceive it. For many people the most potent images are of Brideshead Revisited's Oxford and The Glittering Prizes' Cambridge. Leaving aside the concepts of access to a privileged elite which underpin these images, their strongest concept is one of community which is expressed in these settings as the college, where to echo another icon of popular culture – 'Cheers' – everyone knows your name.

In an FEI quite obviously some students will feel that this community is happening on the 'main site' of the HEI and therefore that they are not part of it. It is interesting to note, however, that other students surveyed who had progressed to an HEI recognised that there was much less of a sense of community there than in the FEI. Their experience will be more that which Richards (1993) has characterised:

> Their degrees will more likely consist of arduous hours in cramped urban precincts from which students leave in all directions... but few will find themselves in a community of intellectual spirit and have the intensive experience of engagement with high or avant-garde culture.

The modularisation, mixed modes, greater student choice and increased student numbers which characterise the expanded HE system have eroded the concept of the course and department and almost completely destroyed the sense of community or collegiality which characterised the elite university. For younger students who have been raised in the eclecticism of post-modern culture, innovations such as student-driven curricula have considerable appeal over the more traditional system.

For the older students who comprise much of the franchise population the community model may be a more powerful aspiration. Such a view is reinforced by the market research carried out for the new University of Sheffield degree, all years of which will be delivered in partner FEIs. Students surveyed reported that they wished to follow all their course in the FEI and would therefore choose the Sheffield programme rather than others which involved transfer to HEIs, even those which were within daily commuting distance. The new higher education will need to balance the needs of these very different students.

The increasing numbers of part-time higher education students are, at some HEIs, concentrated in franchised partners. Part-time students, whether as continuing education students in traditional universities or evening-only or day release students in the new, have for long been the Cinderellas of higher education. Despite the rhetoric, HEIs still have difficulty in providing the support services to these students which they do to their full-time colleagues. Those studying remotely from the HEI will suffer these problems even more acutely. It is important therefore that their perspective of the higher education experience is also part of our deliberations.

Another aspect of the new higher education is accountability and the quality systems which deliver that accountability. The HEQC's quality

audit teams have begun to explore the procedures for HEIs' validation and franchising of courses, and in some cases have suggested that the procedures are not rigorous enough. Up until now, however, they have paid little attention to exploring the students' perceptions from within the partner institutions. The HEFC(E) quality assessment teams' brief is much more about the quality of the teaching and learning experience, but to date their visits have not paid any major attention to franchise partners. The current situation is therefore that there is no external regulation of franchising and therefore no consensus about standards for good practice. Who then is guarding the guards in the new higher education?

The boundaries between further education and higher education are becoming increasingly blurred. Many FEIs now contain a significant number of HE students and therefore their staff are increasingly becoming part of the higher education workforce. It could be argued that these individuals are merely part of the teaching-only HE staff who are not included in the research assessment exercise. However, many do not accept the division and argue that all who are active in HE teaching should have some engagement with research. As later years of courses are delivered more routinely in FEIs it is likely that there will be an argument that research should be carried out there too.

Despite the convergence of the two sectors, HE students and their funding are still channelled through the HEI to the FEI. Recent Autumn Statements which have signalled Government's attempt to restrain further growth in the HE sector have had a major effect on many FEIs. Many planned developments could not be pursued as HEIs no longer had either 'spare' funded students or fees-only students funded at a realistic level. At the same time, the 1992 Autumn Statement signalled an emphasis on growth in FE numbers.

For the management of FEIs, therefore, the institutional turbulence was considerable, and for students and potential students alike locally-based HE opportunities were reduced. The 1993 recruitment pattern is not yet known but if some HEIs have failed to meet their targets the current retrenchment may continue. What is likely to suffer is the development of post first year franchises as HEIs seek to keep viable numbers for options on later stages of courses on their main sites. For many students on franchised programmes therefore, the stability in the FEI which they seek may be denied by changed priorities in the HEI.

The glittering prizes?

The introduction of mass higher education in the UK has meant that we are creeping up the age participation table although our proportions come nowhere near those of the booming economies of the Pacific Rim. Simultaneously however, both graduate unemployment and graduate under-employment have never been higher. In the elite paradigm graduates could be certain that their personal investment in higher education would be repaid by access to higher earning capacity and more stimulating jobs. The latest recession, the reducing level of financial support to students and the growing numbers of graduates all now challenge this cost/benefit analysis.

It has to be acknowledged however that graduates from some HEIs are still more successful in finding graduate jobs than others. In the main these are the more traditional of the traditional universities whose students do not include many on franchised courses or indeed many non-traditional students of any kind. Much of this imbalance can be ascribed to the fact that many recruiters are searching for clones of themselves and since many of them went to these sorts of HEIs they will feel most at home with their products. Similarly the pervasive ageism of the UK tends to favour recruitment from HEIs where school-levers predominate. Nevertheless, evidence is growing of the new binary divide where flexible entry and provision of some HEIs offer opportunities to a more diverse group of students but graduates from these institutions are less employable because it is the elite paradigm which still predominates in the recruitment processes of many employers. There are serious questions therefore about the glittering prizes that are really on offer to the franchised cohorts of the new higher education of the 1990s.

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THE NATURE OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Sir John Kingman, University of Bristol

The purpose of this Mendip Paper is to look at different ways in which the higher education experience can be made available to students who might not otherwise benefit from it, or new ways of delivering that experience. To do this we must have some idea of the nature of this experience that we are trying to make available.

It is actually a very difficult question. Are we trying to train skilled workers? Are we trying to afford means for personal fulfilment? Are we trying to enable social mobility? One can go on asking questions like this and the answer is likely to be: yes, or yes and yes, all of these and then more besides. After all, we need good doctors, we need good teachers, we need good hairdressers (and arguably we even need good lawyers!): our society needs people who have certain skills and certain training. At the same time, we need ways of enriching our own lives and expanding the possibilities open to us, both in worldly terms – getting interesting and well paid jobs – and in more personal terms. Higher education has a whole mixture of public and private goals, to which different people will attach different weights.

It is my view that higher education has to be more than simply a piece of paper that says the student has this degree of this certificate. We object to the places that anyone can just write to and send a cheque and you get a certificate saying that they are a Doctor of Divinity. That clearly is not what higher education is about. But neither is higher education just making available certain pieces of knowledge. It is argued in some quarters that the point of higher education is for the student to come out knowing certain things that they did not know when they went in. It is probably easier to give people copies of a suitable encyclopedia or access to a suitable computer database if we simply want to hand out items of factual knowledge. Higher education is clearly more than that. Higher education is about both skills and knowledge, and about the link between them. If we say we are doing a degree in Chemistry, what we really mean is not simply that we know the atomic weight of carbon – that is something we could look up in a book. The degree does demonstrate that there are certain things we can do within chemistry, certain skills that we have provided ourselves with, and that we have a certain depth of understanding about the subject. As we exercise the skills, we come to understand the subject better and our understanding helps us to be more effective in using the skills we have, in extending them and developing them. So quite high on the list of criteria for defining HE must be that within the particular subject area the student should develop certain skills, understand what lies at the base of those skills, and be able to link the skills and the understanding.

But of course, the skills will become outdated and the things the student understands will be inadequate, because as time goes on, there will be new things to understand, and the student will need to learn new skills. The initial degree course is not complete in itself, but leads on to further development later in life. With this in mind, one of the things that higher education should be giving its students is the ability to learn so that they can develop new skills and new understanding as time goes on.

Skills and understanding within a particular subject area are themselves likely to be less and less relevant as time goes on. Even if the students go into a career which follows on naturally from their course, that career will develop in different directions and one of the things universities are repeatedly told by employers is that they want not just specific skills, but transferable skills, by which they often mean the ability to communicate, co-operate and work in teams.

The employer-orientated criteria are only part of the story, because senior managers tend to tell us the skills that people will need in order to be subordinate to them, rather than the skills they will need in order to take their place or challenge them for their place. So that we need to think not just about training the middle layers of society but also the future leaders, and that implies more general skills. Skills is really too narrow a term, because employers are looking for a general maturing of the personality, a development not just of the ability to learn but the ability to respond

to change, the ability to lead change, the ability perhaps to resist change on occasion. If higher education is viewed as a processing plant, the raw material coming in is young people, who certainly have learnt things at school but who need to be led and taught, and the output is adults who can teach themselves and who can decide what they need to learn and who can judge for themselves.

That is a pretty demanding set of requirements for higher education and of course, the existing universities and other institutions that provide higher education do not always succeed in what I am describing. It is not part of my argument that the traditional university is a universally successful institution. There are parts of universities which would not even see that as being their function. Looking back in history, there have been times when going to university was simply a way of getting a better job later in life, a part of the ladder by which people could go up in the world. There have also been courses in higher education which were no more than training in a particularly narrow field intended to produce people who straight after graduation could perform certain useful but low-level functions, would know the right levers to pull and the right buttons to press, but would find it very difficult to adapt when different levers and different buttons became relevant, or when indeed, they wanted to change to another walk of life. So this definition is not necessarily what higher education always is in practice, but is what I believe higher education should be.

So how do we set about delivering this kind of higher education? Let us try to tease out from the successes of traditional higher education the active ingredients, the active factors, that we should try to ensure are present in any new ways of delivery of the higher education curriculum.

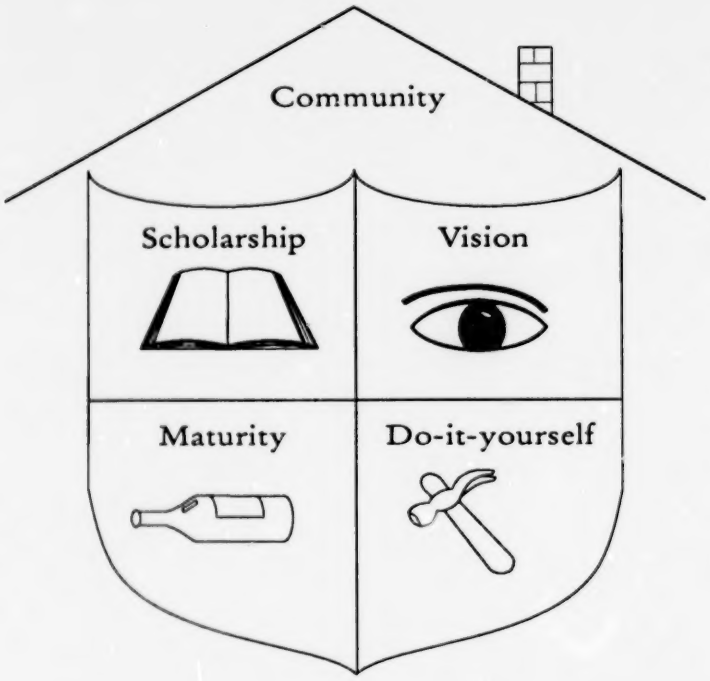
The traditional university is a place in which teaching is carried on, and traditionally the stress has been on teaching rather than learning. Traditionally, higher education is someone getting up and lecturing to a class of students and then probably offering some tutorials and some practical work. A characteristic feature over the last 150 years in this and most other advanced countries has been that this teaching takes place in a research environment. Now why is that? The present dogma in this country is that one should look on teaching and research as two quite separate activities, both good in their own way but neither necessary for the other. Indeed, sometimes they might be competitive making different and conflicting demands on staff time.

The active ingredient in higher education seems to be this: that if you are trying to prepare people to use their understanding and their knowledge in a world which is rapidly changing, they must be taught in a way which itself recognises that the subject they are learning is changing. If the subject is taught as a completely static thing, as indeed was the case in the middle ages, you do not prepare people to think about the challenge of change and to use their knowledge in a changing environment. If the subject is taught by people who are themselves involved in the process of change of the subject, then there is at least a chance that this way of thinking about the subject not as a revealed truth but as a continual search for truth and a continual testing of accepted truth against evidence, then the argument would be students will be better prepared for a world of change. So it is not so much that it is important that staff are doing active research for its own sake, but that research is one way of getting this dynamic feel into a subject.

That is the sort of process of higher education that I have in mind. I would like now to turn to what are the active ingredients in the higher education experience. I am going to make a suggestion of the answer to that, but it is only a suggestion, as this is the beginning rather than the end of the debate.

These active ingredients can be presented as a set of armorial bearings for higher education. Imagine that I am the College of Heralds, and that you want to have a coat of arms for higher education. We start off, of course, with a shield, and the active ingredients for higher education are the things that go in the four quarters. I am going to suggest something on the top as well which represents a fifth and perhaps the most controversial ingredient.

The first element of the coat of arms has to be a book, representing scholarship. Scholarship is a rather abused word at the moment. People talk about scholarship as if it was cheap research. In a traditional university, teaching is supposed to be supported by research, but research can be expensive so we must have something else which ensures that when someone teaches a class, they



have looked up the latest literature and are well-informed, and that is called scholarship. That is not my idea of scholarship at all. Scholarship is an old and honourable concept and if you look at the dictionary, you find that it is not an activity like research. You can say: 'I am going to spend this afternoon doing research', but you do not say: 'I am going to spend this afternoon doing scholarship'. Scholarship is not an activity, it is a quality. It is a quality that our teaching may have, our learning may have, our research may have, even our administration may have. The quality of being scholarly. Without attempting a formal definition that would take me away from the main purpose of this paper, it is about teaching things which are, as far as we can make them, true.

If we make statements in lectures or tutorials to students then as far as we can possibly make it, those statements should be true, not misleading, not unsupported by evidence. If a student asks why the assertion is true, we should be able to go back and say it is true because there is this evidence to support it, and this evidence has been tested and not yet found faulty. Just as teachers should be scholarly, so we should try and ensure that the students are scholarly, and not let them get away with a slipshod approach to their subject. This seems to me to be absolutely vital in anything that pretends to be higher education. It is also difficult. It means always asking ourselves if what we teach is really so, if it can be supported, if it is challenged. It is no good saying 'ah, but I am going to talk to some students who are not going to challenge because they do not know', that is not scholarly.

To be scholarly is not to be afraid that there might be someone sitting in the back row who happens to have read rather more. If there is someone in the back row – probably somebody from the quality assessment committee – we should not be afraid of that, because we should have done as much as we possibly can, and can reasonably have been expected to have done, to ensure what we are doing is true, sound and properly based.

So I would argue that scholarship is one factor which is vital to the higher education experience.

The next important feature of higher education is vision, represented in the coat of arms by an eye. By that, I mean that when we approach a particular subject, we must try to look outward and forward, we must try to look at the subject in an exciting way, set it in a new context, envisage new applications, envisage cross-connections between

different subjects, think of new ways of presenting the subject and try to get the students also to take this approach. We must encourage them to think of new ways of approaching the subject, new ways of looking at things, new ways of doing experiments. The best higher education gives the impression that it is not enough to be right, you have got to be excitingly right. Sometimes even being excitingly wrong is a good thing, for short periods, as long as it does not become a habit. That is why there is a tension between scholarship and vision. So vision is one of the active ingredients.

The next active ingredient for the coat of arms is a bottle lying on its side and is meant to suggest the maturing process of a good wine lying in a dark cellar. One of the mistakes we sometimes make in HE is to try and rush things. Education is among other things, a process of maturing, and the process of maturing cannot be rushed. Of course there are certain areas where a crash-course is just the right thing. If I want to know how to work my computer or my washing machine, I do not want to waste time. I want to get that basic information as quickly as I can. Crash-courses like this have their place, but they are not what higher education is about.

Education has to have time. Young people (and here I focus on the higher education experience for the main 18 to 21 age group) must have the opportunity to think about what they have been learning. Just how much time is needed of course is a matter of debate, but there is a requirement for the bottle to age.

My final symbol in the coat of arms is a hammer for do-it-yourself. Students have to learn by doing things, not by listening to lecturers talking about their subject or reading books about it. Any sort of higher education has to have a very large component of doing the things that you are learning and learning that way.

The fifth is symbolised by putting a roof over the whole (like the old Abbey National advertisement) because the fifth active ingredient is community. Very few of the great scholars have simply gone off on their own and thought great thoughts. The word college that we use so often in education comes simply from the concept of community. Through the ages, a lot of the important education and scholarly activity has come about in communities, colleges, monasteries, universities and research institutions. Our higher education institutions are places where people come together, bounce ideas off one another, modify their ideas and learn from one another. My experience of universities is that students learn much more from one another than they realise, and sometimes more from one another than from the people who are actually paid to teach them.

This sense of community is quite an important one. It is one for instance that the Open University grappled with in its early days, as they realised that they could not teach to degree level people who were just looking at television screens or receiving written materials through the post, and never having the opportunity to talk about what they were learning with teachers or other students. And so you have the famous summer schools which the Open University invented, and which have become an essential part of distance-learning. They have found a way of bringing together the people who are learning with their teachers and particularly with one another, because there is no doubt that young people do learn by sharing their difficulties with one another, by cheating, by copying each other's essays – they learn quite a lot.

So these are the five active ingredients that I believe make up the higher education experience. They can be achieved, as other contributors here will illustrate, in a wide variety of ways to make higher education accessible to more people than ever before. I have concentrated here on the higher education experience for 18 to 21 year olds, and perhaps some of the ingredients can be left out, or at least emphasised less, for students who already have a degree of maturity and experience. But essentially these ingredients – scholarship, vision, maturation, direct experience and membership of a community of scholars – must be part of the higher education experience whether it is on offer on or off campus.

SECOND GENERATION FRANCHISING: WIDENING THE PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

David Morris, Coventry University

Introduction

One way of answering an examination question is to attack the terminology used. Elsewhere I have questioned the use of the word 'franchising' to describe academic partnerships. In the title of this contribution I have also been given 'second generation' to play with. I will play by my own rules recognising that the sub-title 'widening the partnership network' is much closer to the issues I want to consider. Whilst on the subject of the title there is, of course, an assumption that as franchising develops networks will be widened. I suspect that in the current funding climate and given the growth in bureaucratic quality procedures the opposite could also occur: for some the game may no longer be worth the candle.

First generation franchising

Business

In the business world 'first generation franchising' took the form of the granting by manufacturers to distributors of the right to sell their products in a given location. Sometimes geographical monopolies were also conferred along with limited exploitation of the manufacturer's 'intellectual' property in the form of brand names and logos. Typically the operation of the business was left to the owner with only rare interventions by the manufacturer. Entry into the market by franchisees was relatively easy and franchisers controlled their behaviour by sacking them. The landlord who persistently kept bad beer simply had his lease terminated.

Along with easy entry and exit, the market also featured local competition between a number of brands. A small town would have its Morris, Austin and Ford dealers as well as several tenanted pubs. The other form of franchise control was customer switching; the landlord who kept bad beer even occasionally lost his regulars before his lease.

This system has progressively come under threat. Pubs now sell guest beers and supermarkets sell the cheapest petrol. Car dealerships only remain in their current form by escaping laws on restraint of trade which apply to almost every other industry. Even many dealers are switching franchises as manufacturers insist on the installation of computers, tooling and test equipment beyond the financial reach of the smaller or weaker firms. In short, either franchisees want greater freedom in the name of providing customer choice or franchisers want greater control in the name of quality.

Higher education

Obviously HE courses are not like Best Bitter or Ford Escorts. Quality cannot be controlled by cancellation of the franchise by the franchiser or by students going to the college next door – at least not in the short run. The relationship between franchiser and franchisees (first generation ones anyway) value the franchiser's name and logo so much that they will trade on it to the extent of suppressing their own favour of it.

Frequently first generation HE franchises had the unusual genesis of the franchisee wishing to invade the franchiser's market. In my area of HE (business) we fondly allowed this to happen and even encouraged it in the firm belief that:

- there was permanent and massive excess demand in the market;
- franchisees would be seen as inferior suppliers to franchisers;
- it was better to have your own HNC or HND in your backyard than someone else's.

First generation business franchising provided means for franchisers to establish a solus distribution network and thus guarantee a market for the franchiser's products; first generation HE franchising has provided a means by which franchisees can eat into the market for franchiser's

products. The reason for this is reasonably simple, the first two assumptions of the business are not true. At Coventry Business School (CBS) we have gradually seen our internal HNC group cut from 120 to under 40 students. We have massively expanded the supply of places through franchising and this year (1993) the market bears all the signs of saturation. Some of our franchisees are preferred as suppliers to ourselves because they are willing to supply the product in a more palatable form, for example in any evening only mode. We have not even succeeded in keeping other big bad wolves away from our door. As an educational philosophy (extending access) this may be admirable, as a way of conducting business it may yet prove to be beyond our abilities to sustain (at least at the current level).

First generation franchising has produced remarkable results for the student; greater choice and expanded supply, possibly lower priced. I would guess the jury is still out on quality although I would argue that franchising, in forcing us to come clean about what we do to our franchisees, has forced franchisers to improve quality. However, it is showing signs of reaching the maturity stage of the produce life cycle; rapid growth is over, weaker links will disappear, customers (whoever we think they are) are better informed, product imitation is easier and genuine innovation harder to find.

Second generation franchising

Business

The second generation of franchises in business are generally known as 'business format franchises'. My usual example is McDonalds, although there are plenty of others. We are apt to think of the McDonalds' format as being totally uniform although this is by no means the case. Even Ronald McDonald bears the Christian name 'Donald' in some parts of the Far East. In Mexico chilli burgers are on the menu and the Germans can have their beer. Perhaps the biggest change is the least noticed. Originally all outlets featured giant golden arches at their entrances and a common architecture and decor; now McDonalds are pleased to preserve the character of buildings they use and dispense with the giant arches in favour of more moderate ones. In short, McDonalds have recognised the desirability of local variation whilst retaining the major features which ensure international product recognition and standards.

Interestingly some of the major developments in the McDonalds' formula (for example the Big Mac) were originated by franchises. The original McDonalds chain was built on attention to the production process rather than marketing per se. The same philosophy still rules. McDonalds spent seven years identifying suppliers, training staff and investigating the local market before opening in China. This combination of 'globalisation' and 'localisation' is a common theme in many successful international businesses. The key to both strands of the strategy is excellent franchising.

Higher education

Second generation franchising in HE has not followed the business format pattern although there are some exceptions; CBS' involvement in Athens bears some of the hallmarks of business format franchising but not others. On the other hand, second generation franchising may be avoiding some of the problems of first generation franchising by not expanding the market with 'me-too' products.

Rover Group spends over £40m per year on training and development, Nat West claims over £60m. These are sobering figures for those of us who think that we have a monopoly in the education market. No-one knows how many 'company-owned' management colleges there are but they probably have far more students in total than university business schools. What universities have is the right to award qualifications and it is this which gives them something which is can be franchised, which has a brand name. Much of our new 'franchising' is in fact designed to combine in-company management development programmes with our ability to give awards. This can take the form of a conventional franchise of a course or might involve the franchise of only our name, quality assurance procedures and product design knowledge. In short, it is our branded technology that we franchise rather than a finished product. In this sense what we do is akin to what McDonalds do.

Our new partners are management colleges such as GEC Dunchurch, Ashborne Hill (British Steel), the Fire Service College and the training/ management development departments of large employers. These partnerships bring new challenges and new rewards. Perhaps the greatest of these is operating within two cultures simultaneously. Some of the most treasured features of UK higher education such as external examining, ranking students, measurement of individual achievement and abhorrence of 'plagiarism' are opposed to what companies strive for – teamwork, imitation of market leaders and sharing of knowledge. These differences are perhaps most marked when we consider forms of assessment.

'Globalisation' is present in common curriculum standards (including assessment), adherence to major aspects of the CATS system and operation under the Coventry University banner. 'Localisation' takes account of different delivery methods, company cultures and organisation and the needs of the employer. Thus our Postgraduate Certificate in Management courses at South Warwickshire Health Authority, Peugeot and Abbey National are all recognisably our courses and have identical major features but are all closely identifiable with the locality of their offering.

Equal outcomes – equal experiences?

The very point about franchising to employers is that experiences will not be equal although the outcomes may well be comparable at a fairly macro level (i.e. all postgraduate certificates being of 35 M-level CATS points in size and level). Employer organisations do not want experiences to be 'equal' but do want them to be 'equally valid' to those offered by credit-based schemes internally. Indeed the whole point may not be to replicate the university experience. At one level McDonalds is successful because you know what to expect whenever you go into one of their outlets, but if that was all there was, the formula would have ceased working long ago.

THE VALIDATING UNIVERSITY AND ASSOCIATED COLLEGES: THE EVOLUTION OF A RELATIONSHIP

Jennifer Bone, University of the West of England
Neil Enstock, City of Bath College and Fiona Macmillan, Bridgwater College

This paper describes the experience of setting up and managing partnerships between a university and two college partners. It is written in three parts, each from the separate perspectives of one of the partners, and demonstrates the experiences they have in common as well as the ways in which they differ.

Jennifer Bone

The university's experience of partnership arrangements with further education can be described in the following terms:

- how our whole approach is linked to our university mission;
- our present position;
- the phases by which it was reached;
- the advantages and the hazards of where we are now;

Fiona MacMillan and Neil Enstock each address their own college's perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of our arrangements.

The university's mission

The extract from our mission in **Figure 1** shows that we consciously and deliberately set out to be what our Vice-Chancellor calls a comprehensive university. Our mission has a very strong regional dimension to it which we believe can most effectively be achieved in partnership with a range of other providers in the region. In general we do not look for links with further education providers more widely than in our present region. We have deans who, owing to particular academic contacts, have pressed the merits of a link with a college in, say, Kent or Sussex, but we have resisted it. Our rationale is that we are trying to build up a regional identity, which is in part based on our belief that an increasing proportion of future higher education students will be home-based. Universities and colleges who seek this approach must take very seriously the notion of offering students and prospective students a seamless transition from further education to higher education.

When we embarked on our further education partnerships we already had a good legacy of co-operation with other institutions on which to build. As a polytechnic, we were a regional management centre, so we were used to running management courses based in further education colleges linked

Figure 1: Mission statement of the University of the West of England

The new university will be a comprehensive student centred institution whose mission is...to promote educational opportunity and equality and the application of knowledge as the means whereby individuals and society may shape and secure a better future. It will be at the heart of a regional network of higher educational opportunities involving a range of affiliated partner institutions. The network will involve other universities, colleges, schools, employers, local authorities, training and enterprise councils and others. The strategic objectives are to expand access to high quality higher education for all people at all levels.

with our business departments. We also have good working collaboration with Bath College of Higher Education on in-service teacher education from which I think both institutions have learnt a great deal, and we run courses jointly with the University of Bristol. We had done a Cert Ed with a college in Gloucester, and we have a whole network of access courses and approximately 10 links with associated institutions. Finally, we also have links for credit with a number of other organisations, some educational and some in-company. We drew the conclusion from this experience that we knew what we were doing; that with care and application we would be able to develop successful larger-scale partnership arrangements. We soon realised how much we had to learn.

The polytechnic phase

The first phase of the university's franchising agreements, including our link with Bridgwater College, began when we were still a polytechnic. We were accredited by CNAA which gave us the authority to franchise our programmes.

Most of these early links were built up from contacts at faculty level which were then extended up the line into contact between the parent institutions. The operating arrangements for these franchised programmes mirrored the polytechnic's in-house procedures, with its focus on course validation.

As a good example of what happened in this phase, the polytechnic's social science faculty was looking for a franchise, a specific link for their own social science degree programme, and one of the first options considered was a franchise of the first year of this degree to Bridgwater.

In many respects this first phase was encouraging and exciting. Its strength was that there was an immediacy of contact between the polytechnic and the college department. The polytechnic could build on those links very fast, aided by our use of existing procedures to manage the links.

The approach also had weaknesses. As the process of faculty links to college departments flourished, we were in danger of generating too much variability, and in some cases contradiction, even in different links with the same institution. The way in which one faculty worked with a department in a college might not be identical to the way another faculty worked with a department in the same college. It was also becoming difficult to keep track centrally of what was happening across the polytechnic. Without being bureaucratic we needed to have a better grasp of where our awards were being offered and on what terms.

We also found that when we were validating a college's involvement in our franchises, we were spending a great deal of time on institutional issues, sometimes repetitiously. For example, we would take up issues about a college's library when we were validating the franchise for social science, and then the same issue would come up in another context if we were looking at an HND course. What persuaded me at this stage that we had not got it right was my experience of chairing some of the course validations. The focus on individual courses did not provide the right context for handling institutional issues.

This was partly a matter of institutional culture. As a higher education institution we were used to staff being asked to account for their performance to their peers in the context of a validation event. This was not necessarily the case with the colleges. Finally, some of the collegiate systems interlinking policy management and executive authority were not the same as ours, and we were hindering rather than helping the process of co-operation by imposing our framework. It was that experience which persuaded us that we had to think again about the way in which we set up and managed what was now becoming an increasing number of links with an increasing number of colleges.

The transitional phase

National higher education reform, and in particular, the granting of university status to former polytechnics, was an important influence on our changing approach. We realised that the abolition of CNAA would put many colleges which had a very well established link with CNAA but were not going to get immediate degree awarding powers, into a very difficult position.

We moved to a three-fold approach towards college validation:

- commitment in principle;
- approval of the institutional context; and

– course validation.

The first point was agreement between ourselves and a college that there was a joint intention to proceed with a particular course link. This was in effect a formal executive decision at directorate level; in our case in the hands of the deputy director of programmes, and in the colleges, typically the college principal. The second point was that we sought to split the approval of the institutional context from the question of course validation.

Polytechnic phase: criteria for approval of FE institutional context

In dealing separately with the institutional context, we defined six items:

- the suitability of the college's processes and procedures for quality assurance and control, including the role of the academic board;
- that the course proposal shall have been approved in keeping with the college's own processes, prior to its submission to the polytechnic;
- that the college's staff development policy appropriately encompasses teaching at higher education level;
- that the library and computing facilities meet the requirements of higher education with reference to the course(s);
- that the procedures for monitoring and evaluation meet the requirements of the polytechnic and are agreed by the college;
- that the appropriate mechanisms concerning the conduct of examining boards and student appeals are in place.

This framework was looked at primarily by three members of UWE staff with some support from other colleagues, nearly always involving visits to the college, followed by an informal meeting between representatives of UWE and representatives of the college. Finally, when the institutional context had been approved, we could proceed with the course validation. Approval of the institutional context was recommended to the academic standards committee by three of the university's officers: the Deputy Director (Programmes), the Assistant Director (Programmes)/Chair of Academic Standards Committee, and the Head of the Academic Development Unit.

It was during this transitional phase that we set up our links with Bath College of FE, using this three-fold approach, and this experience provides a basis for reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the approach. The fact that we dealt with institutional issues separately certainly produced benefits. It made the validation process much smoother and more focused on the actual delivery of the course. But it did have weaknesses. It was driven very much by senior officers rather than by faculty staff. It was difficult for the colleges to get sufficiently precise information about what we were looking for in our visits – we tended to ask them in a general way to tell us about their procedures. Second, the semi-informal approach to the institutional meeting between our representatives and the college representatives did not always work. We needed a much clearer framework for conducting that meeting. From time to time we were dealing with difficulties between the institutions but the agenda was not set in such a way to allow the difficulties to be dealt with constructively. Above all, as a university we lacked the infrastructure to manage the process properly. The three officers who were handling it were all people who had a great many other responsibilities and our partner colleges felt that in those days they could never get hold of anybody.

The university phase

We have retained the three-fold approach to designation of a further education partner as an associated institution with some developments to overcome the difficulties described in the previous section.

The first stage is now a formal exercise to identify whether we have some congruence of mission and strategy with the potential partner college. This goes to the academic board for an agreement in principle that we wish to proceed. We prefer it if a similar process is carried out in the partner college, so that the decisions are clearly taken at a college-wide level.

The second stage is the designation of the college as an associated institution. Our current processes are similar to those we used during the transitional phase with very much more specific requirements and details as shown below. These issues get to the heart of whether students have an equivalent experience because they include questions about the college's approach to its relationship with students, and its provisions for students.

The second stage calls for rigorous assessment of potential partners institutional context. Quality control at this stage is vital and, to this end, the college has to demonstrate that it has:

- processes and procedures for quality assurance and control, including the role of the academic board;
- procedures for monitoring and evaluation;
- specific procedures and professional administrative support concerning the assessment of students;
- a staff development policy in relation to teaching at higher educational level;
- computing facilities and library;
- regulations and procedures governing the students' relationship with the institution, and mechanisms for pastoral support.

The six-point background to the designation of an institution is now more detailed and the information sought is more precise than it was when we were forming partnerships in a more informal way. The process ends with a formal meeting between our representatives and the college's representatives, on the basis of which we reach a recommendation to the university's academic board as to whether the particular college should become an associated institution.

The third stage is what we now call programme validation, which we used once to call course validation, the details of which need not be rehearsed here.

In order to sustain these procedures, we had to invest in the necessary university infrastructure, including the Office of External Awards which is a key link between the university and its partner colleges. This does not mean that business is dealt with only by this office. Colleges still relate to the appropriate university staff if they have specific queries, but the Office of External Awards is the focus. This is a big improvement in that colleges now have a point of contact from which they can get a response quickly. Finally, the university also has a further education advisory group with a representative from each associated college and from our relevant faculties and senior staff. This provides a forum within which the colleges collectively can challenge the university and we can develop our corporate approaches and our policy together.

Advantages and potential hazards

The main advantages of our current approach are:

- formal institutional commitment is made at an early stage, avoiding detailed work if the principles are not agreed;
- the requirements and procedures from both sides are made clear from the start;
- there is provision on both sides for the necessary infrastructure to support the partnership;
- there is a genuine exchange of educational expertise between FE and HE: neither side's approach or perspective is imposed;
- there is scope for developing the partnership through further consultation and close links;
- there is a joint responsibility for ensuring the quality of the student experience.

Looking briefly at the hazards, these can be summarized as:

- considerable resource investment in a context of uncertain funding;
- the weight of institutional procedures in relation to a single course;
- the possibility of legislative overload;
- is there a risk of cloning?

- complexity for an associated college arising from links with more than one institution?

- can the process be sufficiently fleet footed?

The university now has a considerable resource investment in its partnerships with FE in a context of uncertain funding. Our long-term view is that our mission, in terms of partnership to deliver diversity of opportunity to students, is right.

The main difficulty facing both partners going through the institutional approval stage is that it is a weighty business if all that emerges at the end of it is approval for an award for a single cohort of 20 students.

Nevertheless, the university feels it must stick to its principles consistently for all students. It is for a college partner to decide whether it would be better to look elsewhere if it only wants to deliver a programme to a small number. There is in these procedures a risk of legislative overload, which can lead to a risk of cloning. Most of the colleges we work with are independent in their approach, but when we ask them to meet deadlines for documentation of a particular area, there is a temptation for them to ask for the university's own procedures and adapt them. There is then the risk that those procedures do not suit the college's own context. Further difficulties arise when associated colleges link to more than one HE institution. The two institutions may have different procedures and criteria, and the more comprehensive the linking procedures are, the greater burden that is placed on the FE partner.

However, we are in no doubt that the benefits outweigh the potential hazards, and are very satisfied to have moved in this direction.

Fiona Macmillan, Bridgwater College

Bridgwater college/University of the West of England: a developing partnership

The full history of our partnership with the University of the West of England is as follows:

1974 Somerset area management centre set up by Bristol Polytechnic to run a Diploma in Management Studies;

1991 BA Social Science year one franchise 1991/92 first intake;

1992 HND Business and Finance (Marketing) franchise 1992/93 first intake;

1993 institutional agreement signed;

1993 additional validations for 1993/94 intake:

HND Community Arts,
HND Tunnelling,
Foundation Year Engineering,
Foundation Year Science,

1994 four additional proposals for franchises in band 2 programmes.

This began as a grass-roots exercise, something that people in the university faculty and the college department saw as a joint and valuable development.

Similarly, in 1992 we developed a franchised HND Business and Finance Marketing. We are now (1993) enroling our second intake for that programme, and our first intake is progressing its second year. The programme is run wholly at the college.

Last year, as Jennifer described, we went through a full process of institutional agreement. For the college, this exercise summarised the understanding of the two institutions which was in place earlier on, and clarified some of the difficulties that we had experienced, particularly in terms of duplication of information each time we sought to franchise a new programme. The outcome of this work is that this year we have four more franchised programmes, and have now bid for a further four programmes starting in October 1994. The range of programmes is significant, and there are very few areas of the college which are not, in one way or another, involved in the relationship.

Fundamental principles of partnerships

The basis for partnership
Key concepts:

- locating learning locally;
- optimising learning opportunities;
- working in partnership with other institutions.

Key success factors:

- recognition of the significance of the relationship;
- mutual understanding/respect between institutions;
- development of relationship at all levels;
- quality centredness.

The first fundamental principle is that there is significant common ground in our two missions. The concepts which are fundamental to the way the college works and the concepts Jennifer has described as fundamental to the University of the West of England, give us sufficient common ground to enable us to work together. Some of the language the university uses in describing its mission is already used by the college. For instance, we share an image of being local institutions. The college's primary concern is to provide post-16 education and training for the Sedgemoor Community in north Somerset – which does not mean to say that we are not interested in being centres of excellence for particular programmes – but our primary concern is to provide good, high quality education and training in our locality.

The second principle follows on from that, in that both institutions focus on optimising learning opportunities for local people. Since there is no other HE provision in our part of Somerset, franchising is a means of offering that opportunity to students who could not travel. The third key principle we share with the University of the West of England concerns our shared desire to offer education as a seamless robe. Our belief in a continuum of education and training pre-supposes that schools, FE and HE can work together to ensure a learning for life opportunity exists right across the sector.

In reflecting on our experience of working with the University of the West of England, I can identify several key success factors.

The first relates to the scale of the HE provision which will be delivered through a franchise agreement, and how appropriate the institutional and programme validation procedures are to that scale. The model that UWE has adopted, and which we have supported, is a very comprehensive one – and therefore time consuming to implement. To use this model to set up a single programme for 20 students would be like taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

On the other hand, if the intention is to put a significant portfolio of programmes in place, then it is very important that the form of the partnership is one which will give the students maximum benefit. The recognition that we wanted to form a significant relationship with the university has been important, and a sound basis for us to justify a major investment of time and effort by our staff.

A second success factor for our partnership is the importance of mutual understanding. One of the benefits of going through the institutional process we have been through with the university, is that we have been able to learn about each other. The two institutions are very different: although we share common objectives, our institutional processes and our organisations are not the same. We are part of a society which identifies a hierarchy of learning, the status of HE being higher than FE because of the levels of qualifications. We have worked hard to achieve mutual respect and reach an understanding that both institutions are expert in their field.

It has been important for the success of our relationship that both partners develop that relationship at all levels. Our BA Social Science franchised last year was a true grass-roots development, while some of the other HE programmes have been led by senior management. In each case, we have needed to be sure that what our staff were doing at faculty/department level mirrored consistently our central institution-wide agreements, and that our work at both levels was focused not on the bureaucracy but on the need to offer the student the best possible learning experience.

My final point is the need for proper quality assurance. The institutional agreement has ensured that students who come to the college as opposed to spending their first year of the BA Social Science at the University of the West of England receive the same quality of learning. By sharing good practice in quality management across the two institutions each partner has learned from the experience and found ways to improve their own practices.

Neil Enstock, City of Bath College

Rather than repeat some of the details of how our partnerships work, which have already been explained by Jennifer and Fiona, this section concentrates on why the City of Bath College went into franchising and why other colleges might consider it. One of the most obvious reasons can be found in the culture of FE, which is generally entrepreneurial and has a particular orientation towards HE. This pro-HE momentum is shown in many colleges where, if there is an opportunity to develop, there is a development towards HE. Many colleges have over a period of years developed into HE institutions. Less than 20 years ago, I was teaching at a place that had the title of college of technology; now it is a university. I look up the hill to the University of Bath, and believe that there might still be some staff there who were inherited from The Bristol College of Advanced Technology. We have in the past had waves of development from FE into HE, and so there is still something of a tradition that any college can attain HE status.

Having said that, the mission of the City of Bath College is not to become a university or an institution of HE – the words of our mission do not say that and, more importantly, the truth behind the words does not say that either. Our vision is to develop more into HE, while at the same time retaining our existing range of work. In other words, the development of HE and the franchising of HE is part of an overall development strategy for expansion. We are seeking to become a comprehensive institution, in which the work ranges from special needs, GCSEs, A level, a whole range of vocational work and HNC work, through to higher education.

We are increasingly a college facing competition: we have competition from private training providers, we have competition from other colleges – but most significantly, we are experiencing increased competition from schools. As in many other areas, our local schools are now more involved in providing non-Schedule 2 work, they are looking at part-time students, and they are increasing their provision in vocational areas with the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ).

Looking at these trends in the context of FE enrolment statistics for this year, it seems that there is a downward trend. Students in Bath are choosing other providers. We have two choices for how we might respond to this, given that schools are developing vocational areas and programmes in direct competition with us. We can continue with direct competition and enter into a battle with them in which they retain the advantage of having the students to start with. Or we can work with them, to help them develop BTEC and GNVQ provision, possibly through franchising the validation to them, by helping them to set it up in a general way. This latter is the route City of Bath College is taking, on a school-by-school basis and a subject-by-subject basis. We may give up some of our work to schools in order to secure a progression route for students into the college.

There is a parallel here with what the college is doing with the University of the West of England. We are franchising from them, taking on work which might otherwise have been done by them and agreeing the boundaries between what we do and what they do, putting together this seamless robe, forming the vision of a progression route from school to a college of further education to an institution of higher education.

Management of franchised HE within the college

HE has to be an integral part of the college's provision rather than bolted on. We became involved in franchising rather later than Bridgwater, although like them we started off with a raft of access courses and other more minor relationships with the then Bristol Polytechnic. We have just started two franchised courses: an HND

in Community Arts and the foundation year of an Engineering degree, in common with Bridgwater. It is interesting to consider how these fit into the specific strategies for HE provision in our college.

City of Bath College has a large provision in art, with a high foundation course intake, three national diplomas and extensive A level work. This work is being relocated in one building, with the help of a city council contribution of £50 thousand towards the refurbishment, on the grounds that they need a facility for the community in the Bath city centre. An HND in Community Arts, franchised from the University of the West of England, has been integrated into this complex and has thereby achieved a considerable synergy with our existing FE provision.

On the engineering side there is a very different situation. We have traditionally offered a wide range of HE provision, some HNC and some HND level, across mechanical, computer engineering, software engineering and electronics to meet a specific local employment need. In Bath, the MoD are the main employers of engineers and our traditional work in support of their apprenticeship schemes is declining, so the development of the foundation year of an Engineering degree is partly a replacement strategy, consolidating our existing expertise and resources and applying them to a new programme in a new market.

Finally, we have learned some particular lessons about the process of franchising. The University of the West of England's process of institutional validation was quite difficult for us, and we were put under good natured pressure to examine a list of factors provided by Jennifer. The result of the process was not that we changed our policy and procedure to suit the University of the West of England, but that they caused us to look at how we went about our business. The changes we made were what we wanted to do, putting in policy and procedures for those things that we realised could be improved and not simply making changes to satisfy the university. They have been the trigger.

The main feature of the university from which we particularly benefitted was their Office of External Awards, who successfully oiled the wheels between the college and the university and between our schools and their faculties.

Now that we have been through a phase focusing on centrality, in the form of the institutional validation, plus two programme validations, the focus for the future will be on programme validation. This will require more control and co-ordination.

Our experience in the two programmes so far has been different. In one case – the HND in Community Arts – all the institutions were developing together because it was a programme which the University of the West of England did not offer although they appointed someone specifically to develop the provision. With the foundation course, we developed a programme based on the university's existing provision. Essentially, we lifted an existing off-the-shelf programme and fitted it into our own context. In the first case, the college was in the lead; in the second, the university led the development. There are other possible models of programme development which will require different approaches.

HE/FE PARTNERSHIPS: REDRAWING THE BOUNDARIES

Jean Bocock and Professor Peter Scott

This contribution describes the aims and approach of a recently-commissioned research project into partnerships between further and higher education institutions. It begins by describing the proposal for which we have funding jointly from the Further Education Unit (FEU) and the Higher Education Funding Council (England) and the rationale behind our research. We will then explore further some of our initial assumptions and questions about partnerships. The funding for the two-year project only started on 1 September 1993, so all of our work so far has been in developing the ideas which will form the basis of the research.

Background

The title of our project is 'HE/FE partnerships: redrawing the boundaries'. We deliberately did not choose the term 'franchising', since we are interested in and will be looking at a whole variety of FE/HE partnerships and links. Bird, Crawley and Sheibani (1993) have identified seven different types of F/HE links:

> **franchising**, where the courses designed and developed in one institution are delivered in another;
>
> **associate college** arrangements where, for the former Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC), the partner institutions jointly plan and manage collaboration and are jointly involved in bidding for monies and resources;
>
> **validation and accreditation** of courses in one institution by another;
>
> **provision of joint courses** by two or more institutions;
>
> **access course** arrangements, where courses developed in further education institutions (FEIs) are the basis for entry to the first year of programmes in higher education institutions (HEIs);
>
> **2+2 systems**, usually where two years of courses are completed in FE and two in HE;
>
> **foundation years**, where an effective Year 0 is added to an existing course.

One of the links identified uses the term franchising, i.e. the delivery of a degree or similar course sub-contracted to further education. Our agenda includes the full spectrum of partnerships including joint degree programmes, foundation courses, 2+2 schemes, and external validations provided by universities.

The sub-title of our research is 'redrawing the boundaries' and we will return to this later in more detail. Our project looks at partnerships between HE and FE as part of a process which is the by-product of many different links, each created on a local or regional basis. We want to examine the extent to which such a process is leading to a redrawing of the boundaries between HE and FE.

Issues for the research

The focus of the project will be on two aspects of the partnership: the curriculum and quality. This is because most of the research carried out so far has concentrated either on partnerships from the perspective of access and whether access is being widened or increased by partnership arrangements, or on the administrative, financial and procedural arrangements which lie behind the partnerships. Obviously both these issues are important when looking at aspects of quality, but this research also aims to look at wider issues which relate directly to the theme of this Mendip Paper, for eample, the student experience.

Both of the organisations funding the project have a primary concern for the integrity of the curriculum. HE has tended to express this via an emphasis on quality, whilst on the FE side there has been concern expressed about the possible

displacement of the traditional FE curriculum by HE provision. Both HE and FE often view the curriculum as though it has fixed boundaries and worry that the links and partnerships are going to degrade the integrity of the curriculum. We are interested in whether partnership arrangements, as they develop, change the curriculum experience and maybe even the curriculum itself, in both HE and FE.

There are a number of key points that we want to look at in the course of our research. The first is the extent to which structural links between HE and FE, the development of associate, licensed colleges for example, affect the curriculum and quality. Recent changes in funding arrangements and the reduction in fee levels for band 1 courses in HE, have increased the pressure to focus directly on associate college schemes with tighter, more integrated links rather than a wider range of partnership activities. In a number of cases, HE institutions are consolidating their links with a more limited number of FE colleges. We want to investigate the extent to which these changes affect the curriculum.

Franchising beyond year one is an issue that HE partners sometimes raise as a concern. Foundation years, year nought and year one franchising now seem accepted, subject to quality safeguards. Offering the whole of a degree scheme, or later years of a degree in an FE institution raises quality and curriculum issues more sharply for HE. Our research will examine the extent to which, in curriculum and quality terms, there really are substantively different issues at stake in franchising later years' provision to FE.

Several of the contributions in this paper allude to the nature of the relationship between the further and higher education partners, and the extent to which the development of appropriate teaching and learning strategies and quality assurance mechanisms is a two way learning and sharing process. We want to examine how the strategies that are adopted in FE permeate back into HE as well as the extent to which the HE work in FE influences the other FE work in the institution. For example, the introduction of the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) and Youth Training Scheme (YTS) schemes, created an unmarked boundary in which work was ring-fenced and frequently there was no real sharing of experiences across the whole college curriculum. So we are interested both from an FE and HE perspective, whether in practice the permeation and sharing – the feedback loop – actually happens.

There are issues here which relate, for example, to David Morris' example of second generation franchising with the validation of in-company programmes and the influence this might have on other provision in the HE institution. As the university comes to terms with not assessing individual students on in-company schemes, are there lessons to be learned about the nature of assessment schemes for on-campus progammes? If a different approach to assessment is accepted for in-company programmes, why is it not equally valid for other courses?

Finally, there is a relationship between these issues and the role of the funding councils. HEFC(E) are partly funding our research because they are reviewing their whole quality assessment process and they are interested in trying to find out whether or not their current quality assessment strategies are applicable to franchised courses. There is currently a lack of clarity about the balance of responsibility for quality issues in franchised courses as between the FEFC and the HEFC.

The recent quality assessment document from HEFC (**Circular 3/93**) for example, talks about the importance of the process starting with institutional staff assessment: but which institution do they mean? The FE or HE? If it is the FE institution, to what extent do the parameters and performance indicators that it suggests fit with their other institutional quality processes?

The research plan

In our research we plan to carry out detailed field work in three areas. The first is the franchise scheme linked with the University of Central Lancashire. This is a long-established scheme which has been going for 10 years and, very much like the University of the West of England, it is driven by a central mission from the university about its wider regional role and expanding access. Franchise schemes are predominately targeted at part-time mature students.

The second scheme we will look at is at the University of Sheffield. It is predominately a scheme of validation in which a group of FE principals involved with the FE campaign group decided that they wanted to design an HE curriculum which was different from that in HE, which would challenge the curriculum currently delivered in HE and which they believed would be more likely to support a successful learning experience for the kinds of students that they traditionally recruited in FE. This scheme is very much in its infancy, recruiting for the first time in September 1993, so there is no student experience to go on as yet. Its main point of distinction is that the whole of the degree is to be delivered in the FE college. The students are not going to be linked to the university in any way on their programmes, although they will take University of Sheffield degrees.

The third model we will look at is at South Bank University, an institution where much franchising and the links that exist have been 'bottom-up'. They have been the result of long standing relationships often developed locally between departments or units in FE institutions and the university. This model poses a number of interesting questions about the coherence and comparability of experience between different areas of the franchised curriculum.

Models of partnership

In designing our research, we have begun from the perspective that there are different models of partnership between further and higher education. In principle, we believe there are two major models, which have been described elsewhere as first generation and second generation franchising. We are not going to use the terms first generation and second generation, because that implies a sequential relationship which we are not sure exists. So let us simply call them mode one and mode two.

Mode One

Mode one is the partnership model that we have been familiar with in recent years. Its basic intention is to support a strategy of broadening access, and following on from that, opening up pathways to progression. This idea of partnership has two basic characteristics. The first is that it is external to the HE curriculum. Courses are accepted as given, and in most cases they have been handed down from the HE institution to the FE institution. Most of the issues debated and agreed as part of the partnership arrangements are essentially logistical and financial issues, or issues concerned with the delivery of the curriculum, or issues concerned with the curriculum itself.

The second characteristic of the mode one model is the emphasis has been on the needs of the higher education institution, and the partnership is essentially seen as a higher education-run operation. Further education colleges have been seen as sub-contractors in mode one partnerships. Of course they became demanding and even awkward sub-contractors at times, as sub-contractors often are, but essentially the arrangements were driven from the HEI.

Mode Two

The mode two partnership model is different in that the curriculum becomes central to the partnership agreement. This inevitably highlights, for example, issues of course design and development, teaching and learning, assessment, progression and outputs – all the issues to do with quality in the broader sense – rather than simply the kind of administrative procedures or logistical issues which dominate mode one partnerships. Of course the issues of administration and curriculum cannot be separated and it would be wrong to see them as either/or in partnership arrangements. Mode two partnerships, by including both perspectives, build on and are more complex than mode one partnerships.

The second characteristic of mode two partnerships is that they become less concerned with franchising by HEIs and much more concerned with wider and more equal links between (FE) colleges and HEIs. Partly this has arisen because, if HEIs franchise foundation years, there is often pressure for them to franchise year one and even year two. Higher education institutions sometimes try to resist this gradual build-up of pressure, but there is a momentum built into the process that enables it to develop more into a genuine partnership.

Other developments

The relationship between these two modes of partnership has not yet been properly addressed. It is too easy to think that all partnerships begin as mode one and evolve to mode two. The two models may describe alternative forms of partnerships between higher and further education.

Nor do all models of partnership necessarily fit neatly into one or other of these two modes. We are almost tempted to suggest a mode two and a half, to describe arrangements like the Sheffield further/higher partnership in which FE colleges are attempting to develop alternative forms of higher education which the university simply validates. Some might even go as far as to say that FE-provided HE should be seen in a dialectical relationship with traditional HE, rather like the dialectical relationship between A levels and GNVQs.

What could be called a mode three partnership model is also developing in some institutions. Some HE institutions now want to make their partnerships more coherent, by concentrating on fewer, perhaps larger, partners, rather than monitoring a large number of partnerships across a wide region. The reasons for this are essentially logistical, in terms of funding and especially of quality. It is simply not worth it from either partners' point of view to develop the elaborate systems that are required, particularly in terms of quality, to serve very small numbers of students. Economics of scale are needed.

A further consideration is that many higher education institutions believed until recently that they would never face any supply side problems again. There seemed to be an inexhaustible supply of students. The difficulty was where to put all these extra students. FE colleges had the capacity, and were willing – and cheap.

Obviously this optimistic assessment of student growth is not so strongly held in the current period of consolidation. Some HE institutions find that their partner colleges are also their rivals for some programmes, for example HND provision. This may be another reason why the HE partners are trying to concentrate on a smaller number of larger providers. If this is to be the future pattern of partnership, it does have implications for the way we might expect the curriculum to develop. The emerging assumption seems to be that the pressures of convergence are stronger than those of divergence. In higher education there are movements such as enterprise initiatives, modularisation and CATS which will make the HE curriculum more like FE. Conversely in further education developments, particularly those relating to NVQs, are steering the FE curriculum away from a pattern of unco-ordinated courses. So the FE and HE curricula seem to be on a convergent course.

However, if in the future there is a rather small number of FE colleges but with a larger stake in higher education through franchised arrangements and other partnerships, the opposite effect may be produced. In administrative and organisational terms FE colleges may establish large almost free-standing higher education divisions. Such a development would reduce any cross-fertilisation between higher education divisions and the general further education work of colleges. The assumption that the forces of convergence are stronger than those of divergence may turn out to be wrong.

Research topics

In conclusion, let us briefly touch on some of the more detailed issues we will address in our research. We are going to look at 11 topics:

- mission and strategy;
- the management of higher education and further education links;
- course design and curriculum development;
- aims, objectives and content;
- student admissions;
- teaching and learning strategies;
- assessment and progression;
- counselling and guidance;
- staff development;
- infrastructure;
- resourcing.

In exploring with institutional partners the issues of mission and strategy, we will have to ask what is the purpose of links to particular partners? Why are they setting up partnership arrangements? We want to address these kinds of questions at an institutional level. We also need to review them at a national, Funding Council, level.

Both higher and further education funding councils have a clear sense of what they regard as main stream or core work either in HE or FE. We have found it difficult in practice to define what core work is in either sector, but it is clearly important to the funding councils to have some definition of their core concerns. Both funding councils are aware of the problems that could arise if their core-funded institutions begin to indulge in upward, or downward, academic drift, which could create practical difficulties over quality assessment and funding.

The question also needs to be addressed at the institutional level: what is in it for institutions? Two years ago or so, many higher education institutions probably saw franchising as a way of meeting the educational needs of their area, as something they could do to emphasise their commitment to their local communities, and as a way of keeping other ambitious higher education institutions off their patch.

What was in it for further education? This is a more difficult question to answer. Higher student numbers are a benefit, but they do not produce significant financial benefits in many cases. Status is certainly an incentive which is openly discussed. There is also a genuine commitment in many cases to creating an open network of progression for students to bridge the somewhat artificial boundaries between further and higher education that the system has created.

In our research into this issue of mission and strategy, we must not only look at what the institution's purposes of partnership are. We will also attempt to evaluate how these statements are reflected in the institutions' detailed strategic plans and in their activities.

Course design and curriculum development is one of the most important issues we plan to investigate. We will ask questions about how a course is designed and how the curriculum is developed. For example, is the curriculum largely prescribed by the university or does the college make proposals which the university then approves or modifies? We hope to establish whether the curriculum is the result of genuine collaboration. To do this we will need to address what is actually meant by the course. Is the 'course' mostly the technology and the surrounding systems? Or does it extend to content? If the emphasis is on content, initiated within further education and improved in discussions with the higher education institution, or is it essentially a higher education course prescribed for delivery in FE?

The nature of the course has a fundamental effect on quality audit, assessment and review. It is difficult in practice to make a clear distinction between the scaffolding of technology, the systems that support a course, course content and teaching and learning strategies. They are all bound together in aims and objectives of the course.

Another important factor is the mode of delivery. The same course, the same content, but delivered in one institution part-time and full-time in another – the results would be very different experiences for the students with perhaps very different outcomes. To regard them as the same course because they have the same content would be naive.

Another issue we intend to examine is the aims, objectives and content of F/HE partnerships. In particular, the emphasis on bringing non-standard students up to some kind of conventionally defined starting line for degrees (the standard assumption made in higher education), needs to be examined. This starting point is defined not only in terms of specific knowledge and appropriate skills, but also in terms of broader and less easily defined concepts of 'level'. Although we are not very good at defining 'level', we all believe in it passionately. Is the stress in a particular partnership being put more on subject-specific attainment, such as mathematics, or is the emphasis on developing more general competencies like study skills?

The next issue to be investigated is student admission. Our concern here is not simply which institution formally 'owns' the course, but also which institution the student identifies with, because this is a crucial factor in determining their experience.

Teaching and learning strategies is another broad area for investigation. The kind of issues we will examine are can colleges pre-determine which of their staff are able to teach on HE courses, or do the HE institutions set eligibility criteria which FE teachers must satisfy if they are going to teach on HE courses? This may not be much of an issue

in year zero (foundation) or even year one courses. But if further education colleges become seriously involved in the later years of degrees, universities may try to take a much tougher (and more conservative) line on who they regard as 'appropriate' teachers.

Assessment and progression are central issues with far reaching implications, in terms of quality assurance obviously, but also in relation to performance indicators. For example, is it correct to set the same performance standards for a course delivered in FE and an identical course delivered in HE, or would it be acceptable to let the FE course have a higher wastage rate?

Staff development is also an area of crucial importance. Clearly there needs to be a critical mass of students if they are to benefit from the kind of informal learning which Sir John Kingman highlighted as being so central to HE activities, but there may also need to be a critical mass of staff. For example, to what extent are FE teachers, teaching the same kind of courses as their colleagues in HE, part of the same academic community? We will not address these issues in abstract terms but in practical terms. For example, what access do FE staff really have to enhanced staff development?

The infrastructure issues are mostly obvious. The main point we will explore is to what extent partner institutions start to develop of a common infrastructure, rather than maintaining separate infrastructures, for example, library or IT facilities? This seems to be the logical consequence of developing long lasting associate college status but is perhaps more difficult in other looser forms of partnership.

Conclusions

Let us end by highlighting the two central issues of our research: the curriculum and quality. The fundamental question about the curriculum is whether FE/HE partnership will produce convergence or divergence. Although we may see some convergence between institutions, we may well see highly divergent pressures within institutions, between those parts of universities or colleges which are actively involved in FE/HE partnerships and those parts which are not. Higher education and further education have traditionally been thought of in terms of whole systems and homogeneous sectors, but we will try in our research to examine much smaller units, at institution and sub-institution level.

The second issue is quality. It is important to look at quality in conceptual terms and even to try to define quality. But we will also look at more practical aspects of quality. One of the difficulties is that HE is developing very elaborate quality systems. The result may be a mismatch because further education quality systems are usually not the same. As a result two different sets of quality systems may be operating within FE colleges, one relating to its higher education work and one relating to its further education work. The strains and tensions which this produces will be one of the most important focuses of our research.

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Introduction

A key part of this event was the recognition that participants brought a wide range of experience and expertise which would provide considerable insights to the debate on the student experience of franchising. Three group sessions were therefore incorporated into the programme which were followed by feedback to all participants.

Franchising – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Participants worked in groups to perform a SWOT analysis of franchising from the perspectives of further and higher education. The following summarise these discussions.

Further education	Higher education
Strengths	**Strengths**
For students • better guidance and learner support • friendlier environment • greater access to staff who are more responsive • smaller teaching groups • more accessible than HEI • courses delivered more flexibly, especially in relation to timetabling, to allow for domestic responsibilities • more vocational emphasis • students with special needs much better supported • IT facilities can be of a very high standard	*For students* • broadens opportunities for access • more locally-based courses • opportunities for progress
For staff • provides variety in teaching and learning • HE students may be more committed and co-operative than other students	*For institutions* • facilitates delivery of access elements of institutional missions • allows devolution of introductory parts of courses • save resources for later years of courses • secure markets in context of increased competition between HEIs

Further education	Higher education
Weaknesses	**Weaknesses**
For students • may feel isolated from both the other students at the FEI and from students on the HEI site • disruptive effect of transfer to HEI • social facilities more limited • miss out on experience of studying away from home • library and other learning resources may be limited • staff teaching them may be less well qualified and have a heavier teaching load than in the HEI • a 'non-scholarly' atmosphere	*For students* • disruption and disillusionment on transfer to more impersonal HEI
For staff • academic drift • creation of an 'elite' concerned only with HE students • institutional turbulence resulting from HEIs changing plans (i.e. reductions of student numbers after 1992 Autumn Statement)	*For staff* • loss of sense of ownership of course • different quality assurance in FEI and HEI • internal distribution of resources
	For institutions • decision-making less clear • relationships may be time-consuming
Opportunities	**Opportunities**
For students • following part or all of their HE programmes locally as financial pressures increase	*For students* • more HE delivered locally
For staff • use to attract and retain good staff • teach all years of programmes and develop into HEIs • involvement of staff in research • natural development of HE work • greater flexibility and responsiveness means can respond quickly to new initiatives • development of 2+2 US model of community colleges	*For staff* • joint developments exploiting strengths of partners • joint staff development opportunities
	For institutions • increased geographical spread and market • meet recruitment targets • larger first years allow large scale operations in later years of course including more specialist options • credit accumulation and transfer • modularisation • may attract staff from FEIs • more local students

Further education	Higher education
Threats *For students* • recession continues to affect support for part-time students • graduate unemployment/under employment • restrictions on grants • student support • payment of fees • reduction of part-time opportunities because more people are able to study full-time owing to unemployment • funding differences affect what courses are available (i.e. those with band 1 rather than band 2 fees) • possibility of 'top up' fees *For staff* • disillusion resulting from comparison of conditions of service with those teaching students on same courses in HEIs • poor communications *For institutions* • need to cross-subsidise HE work from FE funds • threat to institutional autonomy • pressure to become like HEIs • attitudes of partner HEIs	**Threats** *For students* • diminishing government financial support • graduate unemployment/under employment *For staff* • possibility of lower teaching assessment of parts of courses delivered in FEIs • diversion from other activities (e.g. research) to support partnerships • leakage of resources to HEI *For institutions* • detrimental effect in recruitment to courses at HEI main site • effect on FEI of quality audit and assessment • financial drain to FEI • internal tensions over balance of work • Funding Council changes of policy

Key issues in franchising

The second group session focused on three key issues for successful franchises – learning support, resources and quality. The following sections summarise these accounts.

Learning support

Participants identified guidance as the key element in effective learning support at a number of stages – pre-entry, on course and exit. However, a number of concerns were expressed:

- the balance between marketing and guidance in pre-entry guidance;
- whether late applicants received equal treatment;
- the balance between guidance being provided centrally and in departments, particularly when it had to include personal and financial issues;
- a perception that the time staff spent on guidance was not accurately recognised within their timetables with the result that

they were effectively paying for guidance from their own time;

- whether students on programmes which received late validations would receive effective support;
- where the responsibility for the accreditation of prior learning lay;
- how support for study skills was most effectively presented.

Resourcing

Participants identified **openness** as vital to negotiations about resourcing partnerships. It was, however, recognised that currently it was a scarce phenomenon, especially when it came to HEIs disclosing the level of resourcing they received in respect of students who were taught by FEIs. Even anecdotally it was apparent that there were considerable variations in the percentages of total available funding passed to the FEIs which called into question the quality of the learning experience which the student would receive.

Concern was also expressed about the implications of 'stop/go' expansion plans by HEIs for the resourcing of FEIs. It was recognised that increasingly FEIs and HEIs were in competition for certain types of higher education students with the implication that the unit of resource for some students would continue to be reduced. It was stressed that the issues of capital funding was one of the clearest examples of where there may be cross-subsidy between FEFC-funded and HEFC-funded activities in FEIs. Ambiguities also existed about how staff and curriculum development for franchised courses were resourced.

Quality

Participants identified factors that promoted quality and those that acted to its detriment.

Factors promoting quality

- trust and openness between FEI and HEI;
- good communication, including listening to each other;
- ownership of the course by a course team which includes all partners;
- effective monitoring of course delivery at all sites;
- HEI accepting responsibility for monitoring all aspects of partnerships.

Factors detrimental to quality

- assumption by HEIs of an absence of quality assurance in FEI;
- mystique of university-level provision;
- fragmentation of course provision;
- poor communication;
- physical and cultural remoteness;
- poor definition of regional provision.

Setting the agenda for the future

The final session drew on the formal and informal inputs which had been made previously to propose an agenda for developments of franchising which would enhance the student experience. Groups directed their attention to recommendations for further education, for higher education and for government, the funding councils, awarding bodies and quality councils.

Recommendations to government, the funding councils, awarding bodies and quality councils

- there should be a mapping and dissemination of franchise arrangements;
- the benefits of delivering HE in an FE context should be recognised;
- a model of whole institutional partnerships and 'accreditation' should be developed to streamline procedures;
- a funding methodology should be developed which passed HE funding direct to the FEI rather than routing it via the HEI;

- FEFC and HEFC should develop a joint approach to the funding of HE in FE;
- franchise arrangements are best developed on a regional basis;
- there should be a definition of what is good practice in franchising which should generate standards to which HEIs in particular need to adhere.

Recommendations for further education

- FEIs should be more assertive in their relationships with HEIs. They should have a proactive approach which seeks out the most appropriate partnerships in line with their mission;
- FEIs should be able to bid direct to the HEFC for resources for students on HNC and HND courses rather than having to bid via their partner HEI;
- FEIs need to cost their HE activity realistically and evaluate the extent of cross-subsidy from FEFC-funded work;
- FEI management needs to instigate appropriate staff management strategies which enable an accurate evaluation of workload, needs for staff development and mechanisms for balancing HE and FE responsibilities of staff;
- although there were attractions in the model of an HEI associate college such 'exclusive' partnerships were not always in the interest of FEIs or their students since they made the FEI very vulnerable to institutional turbulence as a result of HEI's planning and funding parameters.

Recommendations for higher education

- franchises should be developed into partnerships to acknowledge that there should be a more balanced relationship between the FEI and HEI;
- HEIs should define the range of partnership options and procedures to be followed and establish a single point of contact and information on partnerships for both internal and external processes;
- there must be clear communication both internally and externally but it must be recognised that partners may have different motives for establishing partnerships;
- HEIs need to resource adequately their partnerships, including staff developments, scholarly activity, capital and infrastructure, and maintain the same unit of resource for courses whether they are in the FEI or HEI;
- HEI and FEI students should have genuine input to the quality management processes so that they can comment effectively on whether they are receiving a quality experience in their own terms;
- HEIs should establish best practice in partnerships and establish a code of practice, possibly via CVCP.

General recommendations

In the feedback session there was considerable discussion of the issue of institutional accreditation of FEIs as deliverers of HE. It was recognised that currently FEIs had to go through a process of 'recognition' or 'validation' for each programme which they delivered with an HE partner. In many cases these procedures involved an assessment of not only the programme specific resources but also institutional facilities and services. Clearly where a partnership involved only one programme such an approach was appropriate but where the HEI and FEI were working together on a number of courses there was considerable duplication of effort. The problem was exacerbated further when FEIs were working with several HEIs where assessment requirements were often different. A strong view was expressed therefore that there should be a process which accredited the FEI as a deliverer of HE in a generalised way, i.e. that the FEI had in place adequate systems for learning support, guidance, student services, quality assurance, etc. When new programmes were introduced the approvals procedure could concentrate on the course-specific information.

There was considerable debate as to how this 'accreditation' system should be organised so that it could be extended beyond the initial HEI partner. Some participants favoured some system of 'kite-

marking' analogous to the recognition system for access courses, i.e. although one HEI would be responsible for the initial procedure there would be a national agreement for mutual recognition of that accreditation. Other participants favoured moving the accreditation system out of the hands of the HEIs to a new national agency which might be a joint venture between the funding councils and the quality councils.

Serious concern was expressed that some HEIs were not behaving responsibly with respect to their franchised partners. It was recognised that in the new 'unregulated' system of higher education it was almost impossible to decide where the responsibility lay to establish standards or to ensure that they were adhered to. There was no doubt that in the context of quality audit and assessment franchise partnerships formed part of the considerations of HEIs activities but it was stressed that such explorations rarely involved a level of detail which enabled auditors or assessors to make accurate reviews of the students' experience. It was recognised that the CVCP should have a role to play in such discussions but scepticism was expressed about the likelihood of any agreement being reached.

APPENDIX 1: ACRONYMS

BTEC	Business and Technical Education Council
CATS	Credit accumulation and transfer system
CNAA	Council for National Academic Awards
CVCP	Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
FE	Further education
FEI	Further education institution
FEU	Further Education Unit
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HE	Higher education
HEFC	Higher Education Funding Council
HEI	Higher education institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (analysis)
UWE	University of the West of England
YOP	Youth Opportunities Programme
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

About the Mendip Papers

The Mendip Papers are a topical series of booklets written specially for managers in further and higher education. As managers and governors take on new responsibilities and different roles they face new challenges, whether in the areas of resource and financial management or in the pursuit of quality, the recruitment of students and the development of new personnel roles. The Mendip Papers provide advice on these issues and many more besides.

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The list of Mendip Papers is growing steadily. If you have tackled a particular piece of research or conducted a survey in the fields of further, higher or adult education, or have undertaken an innovative management initiative which would be of interest to other managers, please contact the series editor, Lynton Gray, at The Staff College with a view to publishing your work and disseminating it throughout the post-school education system.

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